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PATRICK RAFTER & FIACHRA GARVEY

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A digital tour presented in partnership with **Waterford Music**, **Ionad Cultúrtha (Baile Mhúirne)**, **Riverbank Arts Centre**, **National Opera House**, **Pavilion Theatre**, **Music in Kilkenny**, **Linenhall Arts Centre** and **Siamsa Tíre**.

Patrick Rafter violin
Fiachra Garvey piano

Programme

César Franck Sonata in A major
Emma O'Halloran To turn in Circles
Eugène Ysaÿe Poème élégiaque in D minor, Op. 12
Gabriel Fauré Après un rêve, Op. 7, No. 1



Programme Notes

César Franck (1822-90)

Sonata in A major

I. Allegretto ben moderato

II. Allegro

III. Recitativo – fantasia: Ben moderato

IV. Allegretto poco mosso

As you might expect of a wedding gift, Franck's Violin Sonata, composed in 1886 for the marriage of his Belgian compatriot, the virtuoso violinist Eugène Ysaÿe, is a work of teeming romance, tremendous warmth, spirited interaction, tenderness and altogether charming lyricism.

Ysaÿe was 28 at the time of the Sonata's composition and he continued to play it throughout the remaining 40 years or so of his performing career. His championing of the work proved significant in helping to raise Franck's international profile and standing.

Franck's only Violin Sonata is notable for the demands it makes of both instruments. Its four slow-fast-slow-fast movements cross-fertilize myriad themes in repeating lines that pulse and surge like the heart's tide at moments of heightened emotion. Franck's fellow composer and pedagogue Vincent d'Indy described it as a "true musical monument... the first and purest model of the cyclical use of themes in sonata form".

The gently rocking theme introduced by yearningly ardent violin and cosseting piano in the sweetly languid *Allegretto ben moderato* opening – in effect an extended, scene-setting introduction – ebbs and flows throughout the piece. Its qualified marking is a compromise between composer and violinist, Franck initially intending a slower pace, Ysaÿe suggesting a quicker tempo. Discretely, at the beginning of their relationship, the two instrumental voices are given separate themes that will return in the following movements with ever greater intimacy and involvement.

The fiery, storm-tossed *Allegro*, darkly clothed in D minor, suggests, perhaps, at the vertiginous terror of falling in thrall to another, or hints at marital tiffs still to come for the Sonata's newly-wed recipients. By turns lyrical and pensive, inviting and steadfastly remote, it has, for all its turbulence, a sense of something larger held in momentary suspension and anticipation.

Strife gives way to sweet, supplicatory reconciliation in the split personality of the *Recitativo-Fantasia*

third movement. Here, Franck seems to invite, or at least invoke, the inspiration and intensity that comes from improvisation; a quality both instruments – the ecstasy-reaching violin especially – effusively share.

The finale is a rapturous treatment of the main melody passed between violin and piano in simple but heartfelt canon. As befits a nuptial token, both seem to exalt in the presence of the other. Beginning in a sympathetic union of the two voices, it crests a moment of heightened tumult – a seasoned caution, perhaps from the then 63-year-old, world-wide Franck to the young newlyweds – to end in a declaration of joyous, loving accord.

Emma O'Halloran (b.1985)

To turn in Circles

New Music Network Commission

Composer's note:

"Contrary to what is usually believed, it is not general ideas and grandiose unfolding of great events that impress the mind during times of heightened historic upheavals, but rather the uninterrupted flow of little experiences, observations, disturbances, small ecstasies, or barely perceptible discouragements that make up day-to-day living." - Etel Adnan

The title of this piece, *To Turn in Circles*, is a line taken from the poem "To Be in a Time of War" by Lebanese-American poet Etel Adnan. This poem is a stunning depiction of the experience of living through a period of historic turmoil, and I found myself returning to it again and again over the course of writing this work.

During the first few months of the COVID-19 pandemic, I experienced a profound shift in the way I experienced the world around me. Time seemed to move both rapidly and at a glacial pace, and I found that the only way I could ground myself was to pay close attention to the minute details of my daily life. These months became an inextricable blend of anxiety and dread balanced by mindfulness and serenity, and it is this experience that I've tried to capture in this piece.

By stripping away everything but a single melodic line, the piano and violin become a unified instrument, playing as one for the entire work. In getting to the heart of what this moment in time is about for me, this piece has become about paying attention. Here, every moment is significant, the slightest shift in colour becomes monumental, and at times, these barely perceptible disturbances can become warped and distorted, taking on a life of their own.

Emma O'Halloran

Eugène Ysaÿe (1858-1931)
Poème élégiaque in D minor, Op. 12

Posterity best remembers Eugène Ysaÿe as a legendary violinist of the late 19th and early 20th centuries whose influence on his composer peers was immeasurable. But he was also a composer, one whose intimate knowledge of his instrument contributed several seminal works to the repertoire.

Initially conceived in 1892 as a piece for violin and orchestra (although the full orchestral version would take a decade to complete), *Poème élégiaque* found its first expression as a work for violin and piano. Ysaÿe would go on to compose another eight 'poems', but this first example set the bar unreachably high for its siblings to come.

The intensely intimate and involved coupling of the two instrumental voices saw Ysaÿe taking his first step away from the somewhat flashy signature that had hitherto marked his pieces for solo violin towards a more mature and sophisticated approach to composition.

Dedicated to Gabriel Fauré – as a subtle inducement, some claimed, to complete the overdue piano quintet Ysaÿe had commissioned from him – it would more indelibly influence Ernest Chausson's *Poème*, composed three years later. Inspired by the fateful, final tomb scene in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, in which the young lovers are reunited in life but separated by death, it is, as its title suggests, both unabashedly poetic and poignant.

Ysaÿe himself said of it that "it weeps and sings, it is shadow and light and has a changing prism; it is free and needs only its title to guide the composer and make him paint feelings, images, abstractions without a literary canvas; in a word, it is a picture painted without a model."

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)
Après un rêve, Op. 7, No. 1

Originally composed for voice and piano in 1877, *Après un rêve* ('After a dream') is the first of a trio of pieces that were never intended to be part of a cycle and only much later grouped together as Fauré's Op. 7 *Trois mélodies*.

Its popularity has prompted countless transcriptions for various permutations of instruments, Pablo Casals' arrangement substituting voice and piano for cello and violin among the most notable. It sets a text by the French poet and baritone Romain Bussine who had drawn upon an existing, anonymously authored Italian lyric, *Levati, sol che la luna è levata* ('Rise, only the moon is up').

In Bussine's text, a lover awakes from sleep after a blissful dream of reunion with his absent beloved to beseech the departing night to "give me back your lies. Come back, come back radiant. Come back, oh mysterious night!"

Despite the mood of gentle regret and sweet longing, *Après un rêve* demands the utmost concentration from both piano and violin, to whose rich, melancholia-tinged sonorities Fauré's lilting, elastic melody lends itself with the utmost felicity.

Here, nostalgia for an imagined moment just lost and enraptured sentiment in expectation of a moment yet to be experienced combine as the keening violin carries a yearning melody over repeated plangent chords on piano, both intertwining around each other in long, sinuous, searching, sensual lines. In all, the piece is marked by the exquisite agonies of love lost and love expected, contrary qualities that Fauré's music elegantly captures in its liquescent shifts from anguish to serenity and back again, and all couched with becoming intimacy.

Programme notes by Michael Quinn



Biographies

Patrick Rafter violin

Celebrated as one of Ireland's most gifted and exciting musicians, Patrick Rafter has compelled and inspired audiences throughout the world. A star-studded journey includes debuts with some of the finest orchestras such as Prague Philharmonia, performances alongside leading conductors including Semyon Bychkov and Marin Alsop, and sharing the stage with the world's most acclaimed musicians such as Maxim Vengerov and Shlomo Mintz. A personal invitation to study under Vengerov has led to 1st prizes in international competitions and has been a catalyst to an international career.

Born into an exceptionally musical family, Patrick quickly rose to attention with over 50 national accolades. He is a top graduate of the Royal Academy of Music in London and the International Menuhin Music Academy in Switzerland. He has studied at the Royal Irish Academy of Music in Dublin under Fionnuala Hunt and Eyal Kless. He is incredibly grateful to the Department of Media, Tourism, Arts, Culture, Sport, and the Gaeltacht, Music Network and the Arts Council for support received through the Music Capital Scheme to perform on a Jean Baptiste Vuillaume violin made in Paris in 1840 and a Eugene Sartory bow from Paris 1925.



Fiachra Garvey piano

Fiachra Garvey graduated from the Royal Academy of Music, London in 2013 with 1st class honours and distinction in the MA in Music Performance. This follows a 1st class honours BA in Music Performance from the Royal Irish Academy of Music (RIAM) in 2011 and a 1st class honours DipMus (performance and teaching) from RIAM in 2008.

First prizewinner at the 2012 Jaques Samuel Competition, London, Fiachra made his Fazioli Auditorium (Italy) and Wigmore Hall (London) debuts in 2013. He has also been a prizewinner at AXA Dublin International Piano Competition, EU Piano Competition Prague, 3rd Soirees-Concours Internationales de Piano a Collioure, France and Feis Ceoil, Dublin. The National Concert Hall in Dublin awarded Fiachra the "Rising Star" prize in 2011, which subsequently led to a series of concerto and solo debuts.

Recent concerto appearances include Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody on a theme of Paganini* with the Janáček Philharmonic, Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 with RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra, Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* and Grieg's Piano Concerto with the RTÉ Concert Orchestra, Cambridge University Symphony Orchestra, RIAM Symphony Orchestra, Hibernian Orchestra and UCD Symphony Orchestra.

Fiachra recently performed the complete works by Beethoven and Bach for cello and piano with Gerald Peregrine at the National Concert Hall, Dublin and completed his first tour of China. Other recent recitals include Google Dublin, a series of solo and two-piano recitals in Japan, duo recitals at the Brighton Festival and at St. John's Smith Square and St. Martin in the Fields in London, and piano trio recitals at the West Cork Chamber Music Festival, Manchester's Bridgewater Hall, Wigmore Hall in London and the Geneva Festival, Switzerland. Fiachra also performed a new commission by Irish composer Amanda Feery as part of Music Network's *The Butterfly Sessions* which premiered in June 2020.

Fiachra is the Founder and Artistic Director of the West Wicklow Festival and Classical Vauxhall. He is also a member of the Board of Directors of the Dublin International Piano Competition.

